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SUBJECT: NORTHERN UGANDA: LRA SIGNING UPDATE

REF: KAMPALA 483

Classified By: P/E Chief Kathleen FitzGibbon for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: Post provides the following update on the signing of the Final Peace Agreement (FPA) to augment information from ConGen Juba. The Lord's Resistance Army's (LRA) lead negotiator "resigned" on April 10. Two escapees from the LRA camp reached the MONUC base at Dungu, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) on April 7. Ugandan Government officials are pessimistic that LRA leader Kony will sign and implement a peace deal, and are amplifying their public messages de-linking the peace process and northern recovery efforts. End Summary.

¶2. (C) The Congolese observer to the peace talks, Ambassador Andre Kapanga, reported that on April 10 no one saw Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) leader Joseph Kony. Northern Ugandan elders (including religious and traditional leaders) tried but failed to see him. They reportedly spoke with Kony via satellite telephone. Kony reportedly asked if he underwent traditional justice, mato oput, would he then have to face a legal trial. As of 1000 hours on April 11, the elders were making another attempt to see Kony. Kapanga said that LRA lead negotiator David Matsanga "resigned" his position on April 10. James Obita was temporarily put in charge of the LRA delegation, which was in disarray. Sources among the LRA fighters with Kony reported to Ugandan security officials that Matsanga was sacked and a new team would be named as reported in reftel.

¶3. (C) MONUC officials in the DRC reported to P/E Chief that two people escaped the LRA camp together on April 1 and made it to Dungu on April 7. One was a young male from near Obo, Central African Republic (CAR) and the other individual was a teacher from Doruma, DRC. The two escapees reported that the LRA strength was now at 1,200, including the new abductees, which they placed at over 300 people. They were forced into military training. (Note: Post awaits the official debriefing notes for more details. End Note.) Henry Okello Oryem, the deputy GOU negotiator, and Kapanga both told P/E Chief separately on April 10 that the high numbers of abductees supports the idea that Kony's intention is not/not to sign or adhere to a peace agreement. Officials of MONUC and the Ugandan Amnesty Commission were in Beni on April 11 to debrief a 55-year old male who "surrendered" in Kinshasa on/about April 4.

¶4. (C) On April 10, Gulu District Chairman Norbert Mao and Resident District Commissioner Walter Ochora told Ambassador Browning and AFRICOM General Ward that if Kony signed the agreement, there would be celebration throughout northern Uganda. Both Mao and Ochora have told Kony that the best way out of the bush was through the peace process. They were not optimistic that Kony would sign. Ochora said that even if the agreement was signed, he did not believe Kony would implement it. Ochora argued that it was critical that people

in northern Uganda be assured that they would be protected after they returned home. The two district leaders agreed that after two years of relative peace and security, northern residents would not accept lawlessness and a return to internally-displaced persons (IDP) camps. Ugandan Government officials have amplified their message that it was safe for IDPs to return home irregardless of whether Kony signed the peace deal.

15. (C) Comment. Post, along with ConGen Juba, continues to follow the situation closely. The justice issues that Kony raised are fundamental to the resolution of the conflict. He continues to demand that the International Criminal Court (ICC) warrants be lifted before he signs an agreement. It is not clear how long the Government of Uganda will continue with the process given the unpredictability of Kony, LRA movements to CAR, and LRA abductions to beef up the group's capabilities. It is clear that the Government's faith in the process has waned, despite positive public pronouncements by its negotiators. Officials in Uganda will likely continue with public messages de-linking northern recovery and IDP returns from the peace process.

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